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centre for
**positive health
sciences**

The Science of Health & Happiness

Meditation for Health

Notes & Resources

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AND HEALTH
SCIENCES

Myth	Response
Meditation is all in your head	Meditation practice integrates the mind and the body; it can have positive impacts on both
Meditation is all about stopping your thoughts and wiping your mind	It is not possible to completely stop your thinking process. However, it is possible to disengage from thinking, with practice
You need a meditation stool, bell, books, apps, candles and special cushions to meditate	All you need to practice meditation is your head and your breath
You need to practice for hours each day to receive any benefit from meditation practice	Research shows that positive impacts can be observed after only 5 minutes of practice, twice daily for 4 weeks
Meditation is a Buddhist practice that has no real place for those of other religions or atheists	Meditation practice is thousands of years old and has been practiced by members of all global religions, including Christians; you don't have to be religious to gain the benefits
Meditation can be dangerous	Meditation practice creates an enhanced awareness of internal processes like thoughts, emotions, sensations and memories. For some people, it can be painful to look inside the mind and find suffering or difficult memories. It is recommended that if you have recently suffered trauma or have ongoing mental health issues that you speak to a mental health professional first

Proven health benefits of meditation?

More quality research is needed but significant trends are emerging

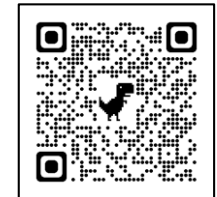
Enhanced immune function and balanced inflammatory responses

Black, D. S., & Slavich, G. M. (2016). Mindfulness meditation and the immune system: a systematic review of randomized controlled trials. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1373(1), 13–24. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nyas.12998>



Epigenetic changes of disease modifying genes

Kaliman P. Epigenetics and meditation. *Curr Opin Psychol*. 2019;28:76-80.



Improved heart health

Levine GN, Lange RA, Bairey-Merz CN, et al. Meditation and Cardiovascular Risk Reduction: A Scientific Statement From the American Heart Association. *J Am Heart Assoc*. 2017;6(10):e002218. Published 2017 Sep 28.



Better sleep

Black DS, O'Reilly GA, Olmstead R, Breen EC, Irwin MR. Mindfulness Meditation and Improvement in Sleep Quality and Daytime Impairment Among Older Adults With Sleep Disturbances: A Randomized Clinical Trial. *JAMA Intern Med*. 2015;175(4):494–501.



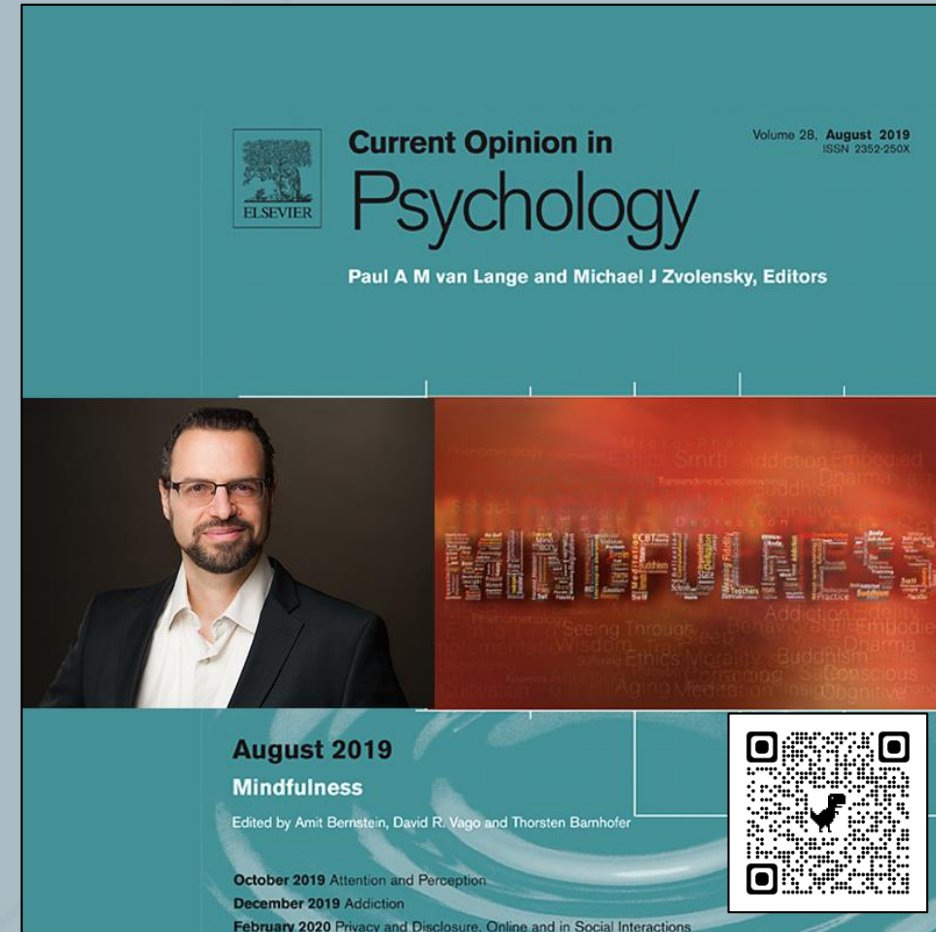
Better Psychological health

Keng SL, Smoski MJ, Robins CJ. Effects of mindfulness on psychological health: a review of empirical studies. *Clin Psychol Rev*. 2011;31(6):1041-1056.



Proven health benefits of meditation?

More quality research is needed but significant trends are emerging



Irish-based research

Impact of ABT practice on mind and body



Journal of Integrative Medicine 17 (2019) 173–180

Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)

Journal of Integrative Medicine

journal homepage: www.jcimjournal.com/jim
www.journals.elsevier.com/journal-of-integrative-medicine

Original Research Article

Burnout in the emergency department: Randomized controlled trial of an attention-based training program

Pádraic J. Dunne^{a,*}, Julie Lynch^{b,1}, Lucia Prihodova^b, Caoimhe O'Leary^b, Atiyeh Ghoreyshi Sharee A. Basdeo^d, Donal J. Cox^d, Rachel Breen^b, Ali Sheikhi^d, Áine Carroll^e, Cathal Walsh^d Geraldine McMahon^f, Barry White^g

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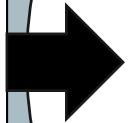
^cDepartment of Innovation, Fitbit Inc., San Francisco, CA 94105, USA

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^eHealth Service Executive, Dr Steevens' Hospital, Dublin D08 W2A8, Ireland

ST JAMES'S HOSPITAL





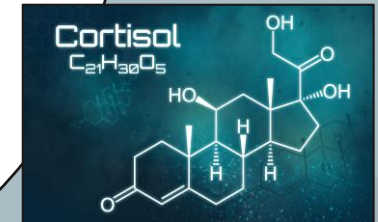
Decreased burnout



Improved sleep



Decreased stress hormone



Boosted immunity
– IL-6/TNF- α



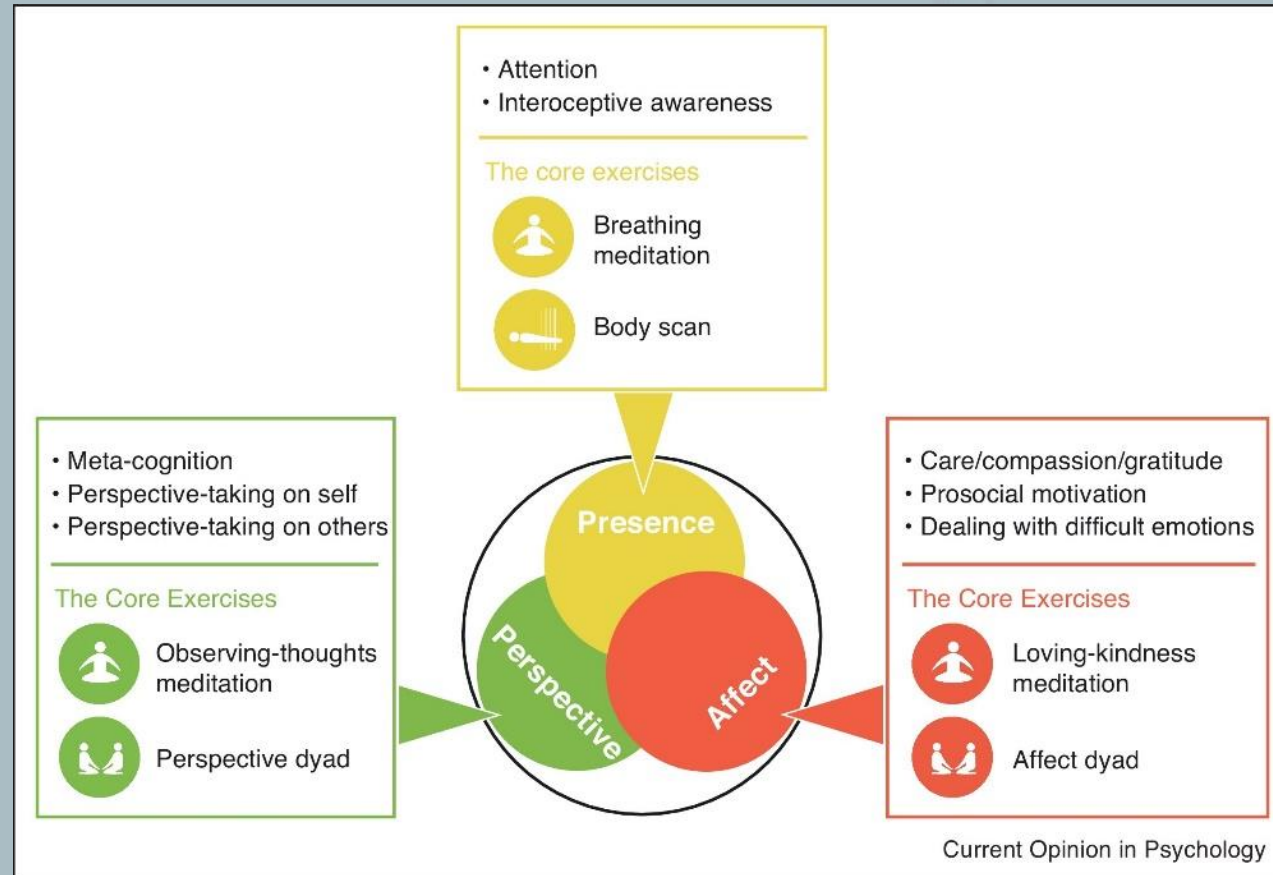
Are all meditation practices the same?

Different types of meditation practices

Attention-based Training (ABT)

Mantra meditation

Develop focus on a phrase (mantra), the breath, an internal or external image; disengage from thinking, emotions and sensations



Mindfulness meditation

Observing thinking, emotions, sensations in a non-judgemental way

Loving-kindness meditation; Gratitude-based meditation

Develop compassion for self and others



Use the right tool for the right job

Problem with compassion in work due to burnout?

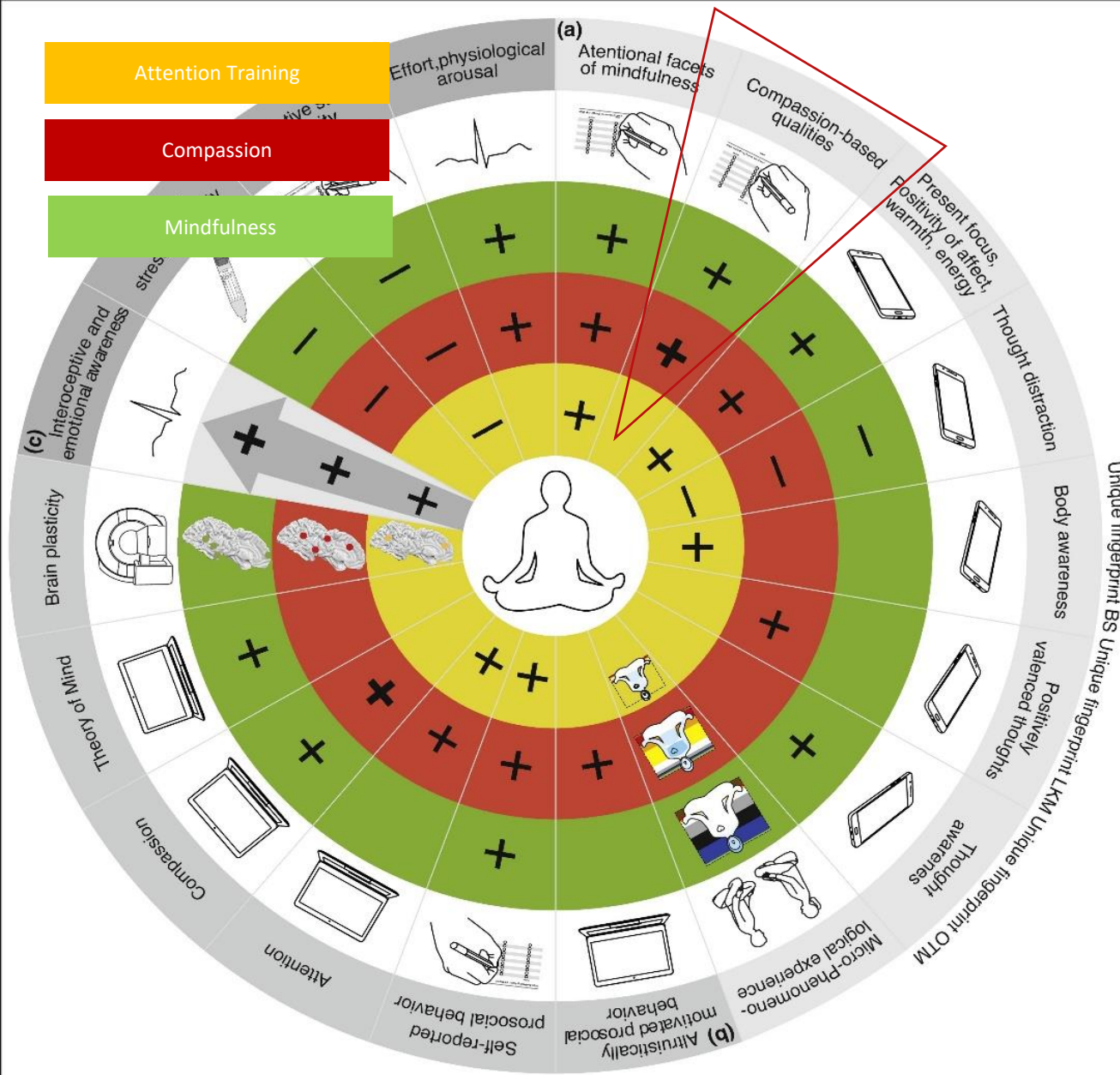
Loving-kindness meditation
 Gratitude-based meditation
 (Develop compassion for self and other)

- Care/compassion/gratitude
- Prosocial motivation
- Dealing with difficult emotions

The Core Exercises

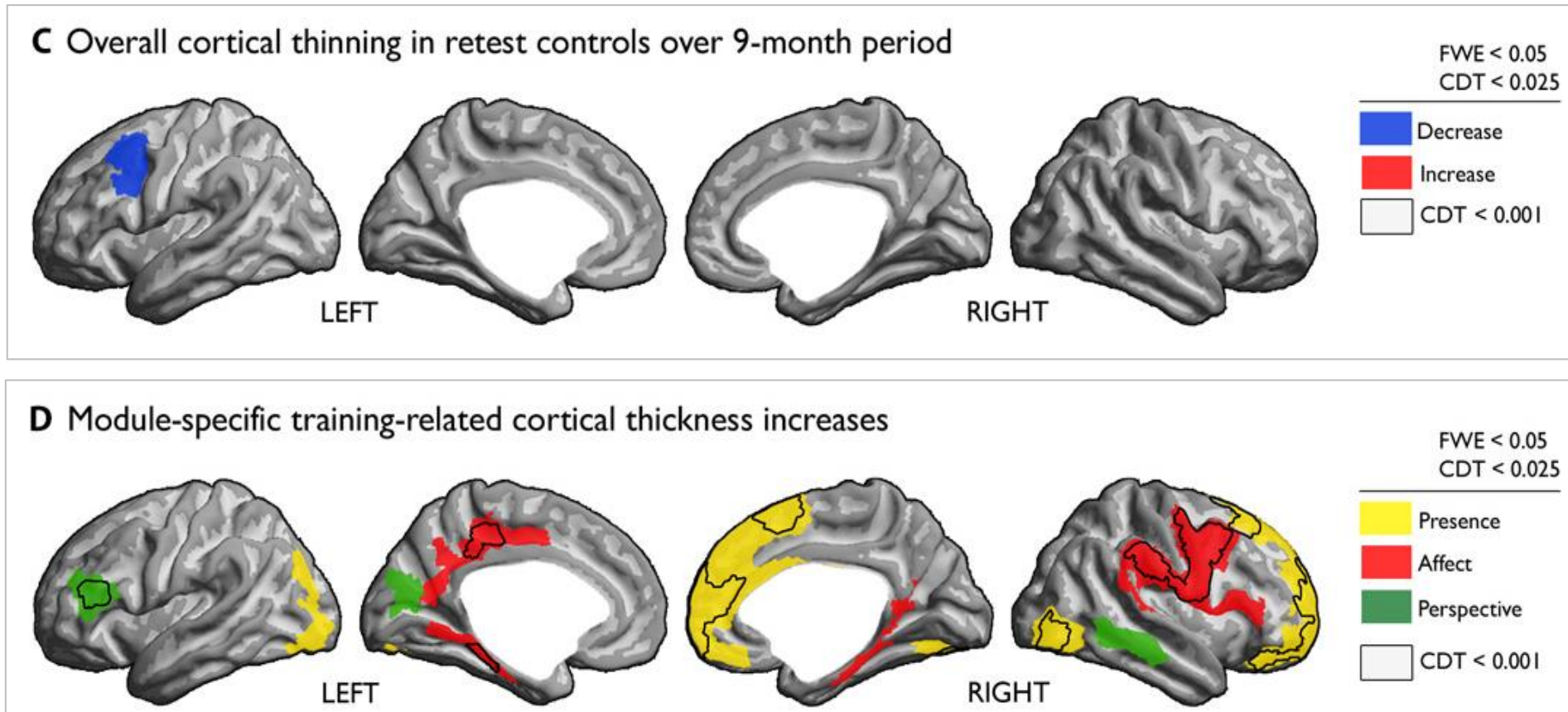


Loving-kindness meditation



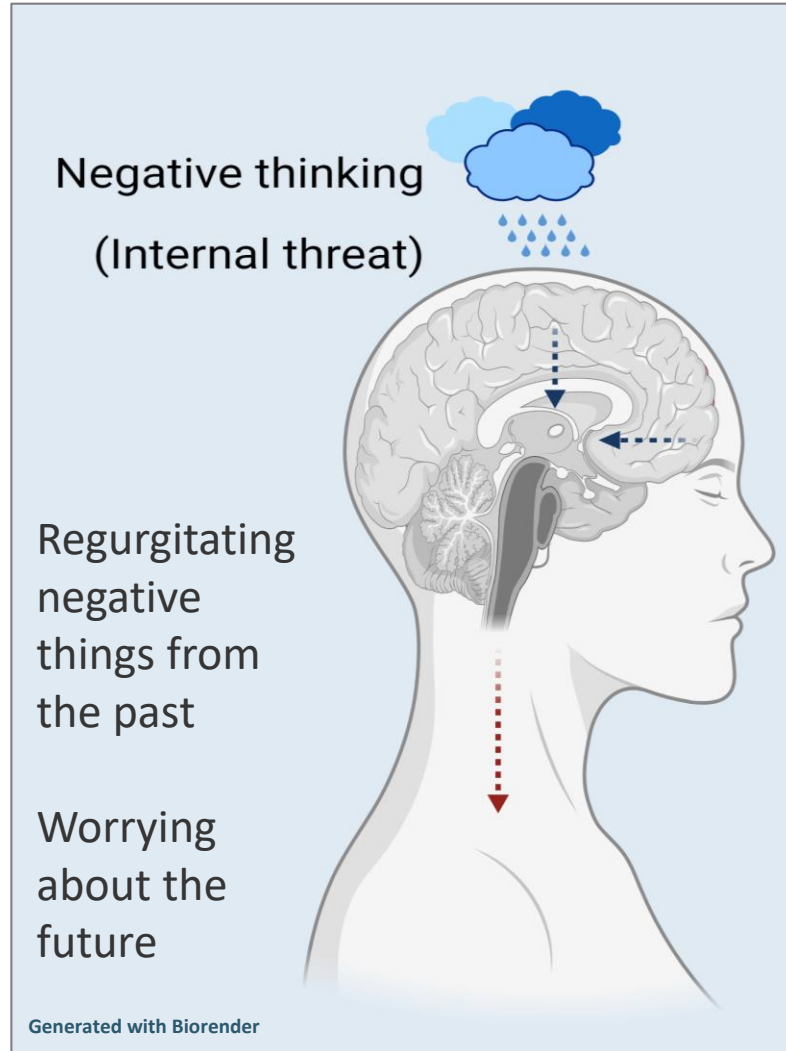
Different practices – different effects on the brain

Compassion-based meditations develop the emotional
connections on the brain



Cultivate focus and boycott the inner critic

Negative thinking and worry can trigger a stress response



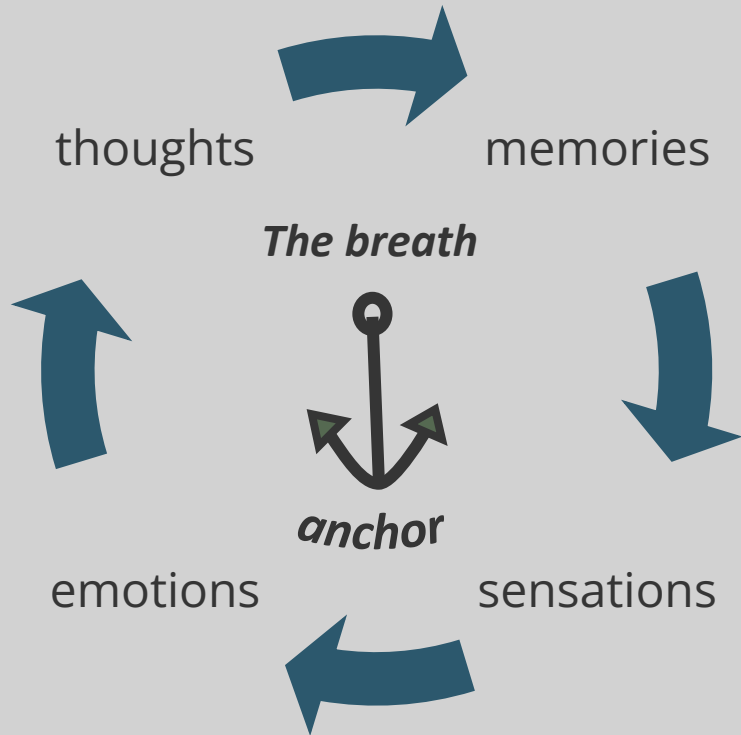
When your inner critic takes hold, it can damage your health (physically and mentally)



Our free 8-week programme

ABT practice

Choose an anchor to help ground you during your practice – e.g., the **breath**



Disengage from thought, emotions, sensations & memories by simply returning to your anchor, on a moment by moment basis



6 x 2-minute ABT
YouTube videos



LINK

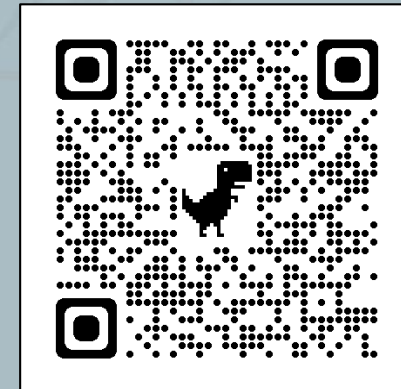
Sometimes, we are too anxious to simply sit and practice.



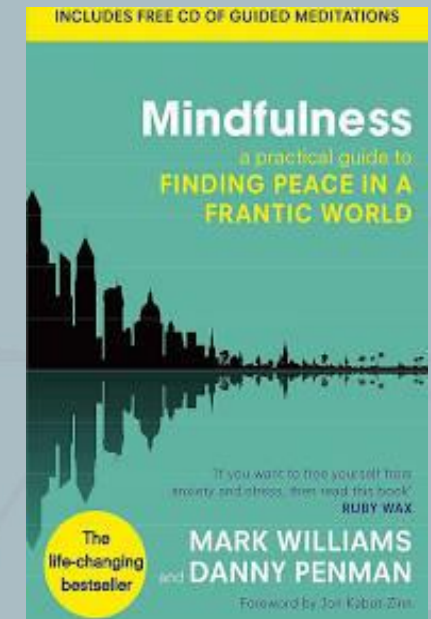
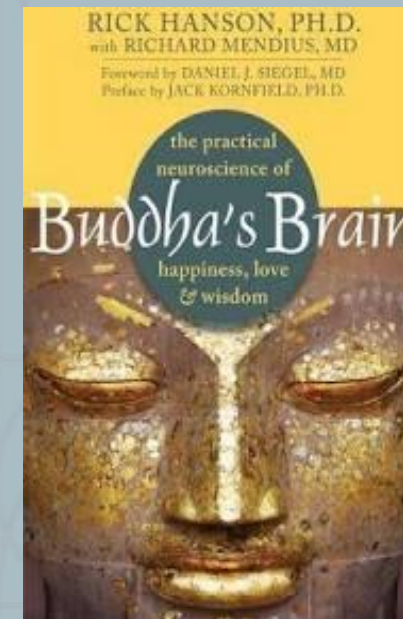
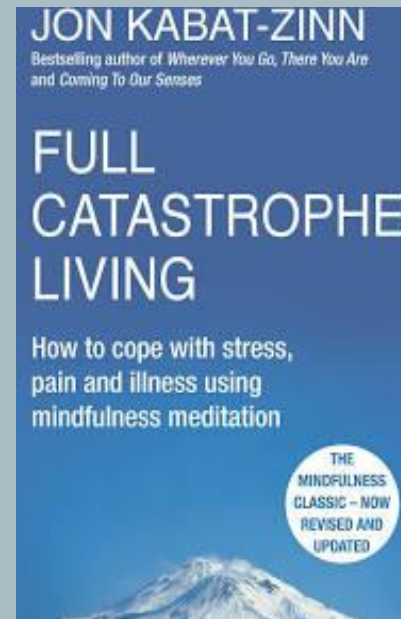
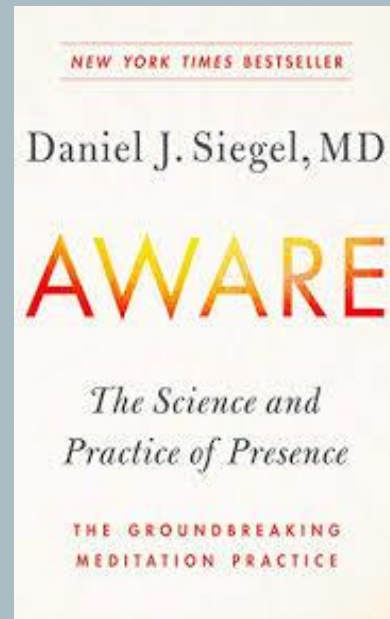
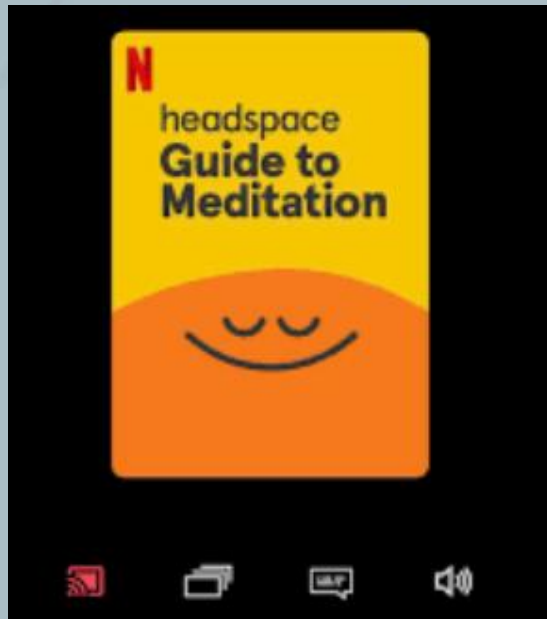
The Body Scan

- Helps calm the body during anxiety, stress, pain, frustration and discomfort
- Prepares the mind and body for meditation
- Useful for insomnia

Click [here](#) to practice the body scan for free



Recommended viewing & reading



Summary

- There are many misconceptions about meditation practice, not least the fact that meditation is not about stopping your thinking processes
- There has been an exponential growth in the number of meditation-based research articles published since 2000; not all of these studies are well designed or powered – more research is needed
- Meditation has been shown to improve physical and mental health
- Not all meditation practices are the same; broadly, three types of meditations have been described: (1) **mindfulness-based**, (2) **concentration-based meditation**; (3) **compassion-based meditations**

Summary

- Attention-based Training (ABT) involves using an anchor (the breath or a chosen phrase/mantra) to help you disengage from thoughts, memories, emotions and sensations on a moment by moment basis
- Practice the Body Scan meditation *prior to* the central ABT practice when feeling agitated or in discomfort
- Regular practice is required for lasting benefits – start with 2 minutes each day





HOMEWORK

Sometimes, we are too anxious
to simply sit and practice.



The Body Scan

- Helps calm the body during anxiety, stress, pain, frustration and discomfort
- Prepares the mind and body for meditation
- Useful for insomnia

Click [here](#) to
practice the body
scan for free



- Pick a quiet space anywhere
- Listen to the Body Scan for 10 minutes each day this week
- Try to practice in the same place at the same time each day
- Record how you are feeling before and after each practice
- Note any changes at the end of the week